United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

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12 September 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council recommends to General Assembly admission of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to United Nations membership.

- Executive Chairman of Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament says that while the Commission made progress, it did not receive full cooperation in major areas of its work.

- Preparatory Committee for 1993 World Conference on Human Rights seeks opportunity to rethink United Nations human rights policy and budget.

- Transparency and openness to reinforce mutual confidence-building measures between States is stressed in Third Review Conference of States parties to Biological Weapons Convention.

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The Security Council this morning decided without a vote to recommend to the General Assembly that it admit the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as members of the United Nations.

The final decision to admit the three Republics will be taken at the General Assembly's forty-sixth session due to begin on Tuesday, 17 September.

In a statement at the meeting, Council President, Jean-Bernard Merimée of France said the Council's decision was of great symbolic and historic importance. He said, "we are entering a world where perhaps there is less order, but where there is ever more hope".

Last month, the Security Council recommended for admission to the United Nations four States — the two Koreas and the two Pacific States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. The admission of the seven new countries will bring to 166 the total number of United Nations Member States.

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For information media—not an official record

The Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, told correspondents yesterday that while inspections had made some progress, the Commission did not receive full cooperation in major areas of its work.

He said the Commission was trying to understand how all the different Iraqi military activities interrelated in what he called an Iraqi "masterplan". Inspections were continuing in order to gain full disclosure of all Iraqi military capabilities.

Mr. Ekeus went on to say that the Commission needed helicopters to carry out flights over Iraq as mandated by Security Council resolution 707 (1991) and for destruction of weapons in areas remote from Baghdad. The German Government had provided the Commission with three helicopters with a full crew. Mr. Ekeus noted that he considered the Iraqi proposal to offer the use of its own helicopters as inappropriate because of the need for surprise visits and for short notice activities.

The question of the Special Commission's use of helicopters was discussed by members of the Security Council during consultations on Tuesday, following allegations that Iraqi authorities had refused to allow an inspection team to fly its helicopters over an Iraqi weapon site.

Meanwhile, it was announced at headquarters yesterday that a Special Commission inspection team had recently returned from carrying out the fourth in a continuing series of inspections of Iraq's chemical weapon capabilities.

A United Nations official told correspondents that the team was assigned two main tasks during the inspection period of 1 to 4 September, including a survey at a chemical weapon site at Al Muthanna State Establishment, and the destruction at that site of unfilled munitions found during a previous inspection of the site. The official said that both tasks were successfully achieved and that in addition, a number of filled chemical munitions including some SCUD missile warheads were moved to Al Muthanna where they were being collected for eventual destruction.

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The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights would provide an opportunity to rethink United Nations policy in the field of human rights, the Chairman of the United Nations Subcommission on Minorities, Louis Joinet, told the Committee preparing for the Conference, yesterday in Geneva.

Mr. Joinet, human rights expert from France, asked whether the conference would be able to make credible proposals if the portion of the United Nations budget devoted to human rights remained at 0.7 per cent. He spoke to the Committee as it continued to debate proposals regarding the agenda, rules of procedure, venue and participation at the high-level Conference.

Also addressing the Committee, yesterday, Shun Chetty of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that from a

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human rights perspective the element of coercion in any refugee movement was most troubling. The right to freedom of movement in relation to one's own country was denied when a refugee was compelled to leave or denied the right to return.

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Participants in the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention are currently continuing the general debate in Geneva on the implementation and operation of the Convention.

Two Review Conferences of the Biological Weapons Convention have already been held. They took place in Geneva in 1980 and in 1986. To date, there are 118 States parties adhering to the Convention, which prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxic weapons and calls for their destruction.

Yesterday, speakers stressed the importance of transparency and openness to reinforce mutual confidence-building measures between States. In turn, this openness would help to prevent global proliferation of biological weapons and lay to rest concerns that new technology could be misused for weapons purposes.

On Tuesday, 10 September, some States parties recommended during the debate that an ad hoc group of scientific and technical experts entrusted with the task of verification should be convened. The group, which should be accessible to experts of all States parties, should also be able to suggest options for verification and compliance procedures, it was suggested.

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General holds talks with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on situation in Persian Gulf, UN activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Western Sahara.

- United Nations spokesman reports Swedish soldier serving in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon killed and several wounded.

- Security Council holds consultations on the question of the use of UN helicopters to inspect Iraqi weapons sites.

- Secretary-General welcomes United States and Soviet announcement to cut off weapons deliveries to all Afghan sides.

- General Assembly adopts Secretary-General's second progress report on Implementation of Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in South Africa. Hears statement by anti-Apartheid Committee Chairman.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar arrived today in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah after a three-day official visit to Iran.

In Jeddah he met with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia with whom he discussed the situation in the Persian Gulf, latest developments relating to United Nations activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Western Sahara and recent developments in the international situation. The Secretary-General briefed King Fahd on his efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan on the basis of his five-point proposals of 21 May, which suggested elements that could serve as a basis for a political settlement of the Afghan problem.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General had a meeting on the situation in Afghanistan with the President of Pakistan, Ghulam Ishaq Khan. The discussions, which he termed fruitful, covered all aspects of the Afghan question. Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar briefed the President on his latest efforts in promoting a political settlement in Afghanistan, and the President reaffirmed

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his Government's support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and its commitment to a speedy political settlement of the Afghan question.

Also yesterday, Mr. Pérez de Cuellar had discussions with leaders of Mujahedeen groups based in Peshawar, and the leader of the Iran-based Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan.

They discussed all aspects of the situation in Afghanistan and the representatives of the Mujahedeen pledged full support to the Secretary-General's five-point plan for a political settlement in Afghanistan.

Following his talks with the Mujahedeen leaders, the Secretary-General told the press that he had made an appeal to all Mujahedeen factions to refrain from military activity in order to give a chance to his efforts. He said he would discuss the same question with the authorities in Saudi Arabia.

Tomorrow, Mr. Pérez de Cuellar is scheduled to meet with the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Abdullah Bishara. He will return to New York over the weekend.

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A United Nations spokesman told correspondents today that a Swedish soldier serving in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was killed and several others wounded in an incident earlier today. The office of the Secretary-General was to report to the Security Council after a full investigation had been undertaken by UNIFIL.

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The Security Council held consultations this afternoon to discuss the refusal of the Iraqi authorities to allow an inspection team of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament to overfly Iraqi weapons sites with United Nations helicopters.

Following the meeting, Council President Jean-Bernard Merimée of France told the press that the Council had decided that the Council President should summon the Iraqi Ambassador to tell him that it considered the matter "very serious". Mr. Merimée said he expected to see the Iraqi Ambassador as quickly as possible.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar today welcomed the announcement made by the Governments of the Soviet Union and the United States to discontinue their weapons deliveries to all Afghan sides, effective 1 January 1992.

A United Nations spokesman told correspondents that the Secretary-General had noted with appreciation that such a decision represented a major contribution towards implementing one of the key provisions of his 21 May

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statement. That statement suggested elements which could serve as a basis for a political settlement of the Afghan problem.

The Secretary-General stated that the decision by the United States and Soviet Governments would give impetus to the current efforts aimed at achieving a political solution. He urged all others concerned to urgently take similar decisions in this direction.

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The General Assembly this morning adopted the Secretary-General's second progress report on the Implementation of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa.

The Assembly also adopted a resolution sponsored by Nigeria by which the Secretary-General was asked to continue to promote all efforts leading to the eradication of apartheid through genuine negotiations and to remain actively seized of developments in South Africa. In addition, he was asked to submit to the Assembly, during 1992, another report on further progress in the implementation of the Declaration.

In his report, Mr. Pérez de Cuellar stated that, during the past year, "the progress towards the end of apartheid in South Africa, although halting, remained on course". A most notable development was the repeal of major legal structures of apartheid. The wave of violence that engulfed the country during the period under review had, regrettably, he said, become a severe test of confidence and a serious obstacle to the evolving political dialogue.

In a statement to the Assembly, Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, Ibrahim A. Gambari of Nigeria said that while a large number of political prisoners had been released, hundreds more were still in jail because the authorities claimed that their offenses were serious and were not of a political nature. It was imperative, he said, that that matter be resolved quickly to open the way for negotiations.

The Assembly will meet again on Monday, 16 September, to close its forty-fifth session.

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16 September 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General holds talks with President of El Salvador and General Command of Frente Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation at UN Headquarters.

- General Assembly ends resumed forty-fifth session; hears concluding statement by outgoing President Guido de Marco of Malta.

- Secretary-General calls for strengthened resolve to build a more peaceful world in message to mark International Day of Peace.

- Ente Naziolale Idrocarburi -- Italian petroleum corporation -- will launch project on child care protection with United Nations Children's Fund.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar met this afternoon at Headquarters with President Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador and the General Command of the Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional.

The Secretary-General told correspondents this morning that he considered his meetings with the parties "extremely important" and that he hoped some progress would be made in the negotiations. He said he would be meeting separately with President Cristiani and the FMLN.

The Secretary-General invited the two parties to New York for talks in order to break the deadlock in the current negotiations between both sides. The consultations will focus on the question of guarantees and conditions for the reintegration of FMLN members into society.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar also replied to questions about his current efforts to free all the hostages and detainees held in Lebanon and Israel, saying he was still hopeful for a solution and that he was continuing his diplomatic efforts.

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The General Assembly this morning ended its resumed forty-fifth session and deferred action on a number of issues postponing them to the forty-sixth session which will begin tomorrow.

The issues on which the Assembly deferred action related to Cyprus, Iraqi aggression and the occupation of Kuwait; and the financing of activities arising from Security Council resolution 687 (1991) regarding the cease-fire in the Gulf conflict.

However it concluded consideration of items concerning the question of Palestine; the situation in Central America; peace-keeping operation; crime prevention and criminal justice; and the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991.

In a statement closing the session, the outgoing President, Guido de Marco of Malta said he had held intensive consultations on the question of revitalization of the General Assembly during his twelve months tenure as President. He proposed that existing internal structures and procedures be used in a better way and adapted when necessary in order to make the Assembly's work more efficient. He also proposed that the Assembly's decision-making process and its follow-up be improved so that its deliberations be given more authority. Thirdly, Mr. de Marco suggested an improved relationship between the work of the Assembly and that of other parts of the United Nations system, including the Secretariat.

Tomorrow, 17 September, the Assembly will elect its new President and vote on requests for memberships by seven nations: the two Koreas, the two Pacific Islands of the Marshall Islands and Micronesia, and the three Baltic republics: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has issued a message to mark the International Day of Peace, which traditionally coincides with the opening of a new General Assembly session.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said, in his message, that unprecedented change had brought fresh opportunities for peace and that the movement for democracy had advanced impressively in diverse areas. But, the Secretary-General said, the newly released energies must be channelled towards cooperation between differenct peoples rather than "towards the narrow nationalism that feeds upon fear and prejudice".

The Secretary-General called for renewed attention to continuing global problems as violations of human rights, the deterioration of the environment, overpopulation, drug abuse, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and crime. Peace could not attain its fullness nor could the ecological health of the planet be sustained without balanced economic development, he said.

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The Italian petroleum corporation, Ente Nazional Idrocarburi (ENI) announced today that it will donate $1 million to a joint project with the United Nations Children's Fund to advance children's health in three Third World countries.

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar met today with the Chairman of ENI, Gabriele Cagliari, and Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), James P. Grant to discuss the project for children in Ecuador, Angola and India.

The goal of the proposed project, titled "ENI for UNICEF", is to encourage and implement low-cost preventive techniques aimed at reducing infant mortality.

ENI appealed to the world's leading industrial groups to accept the challenge and to join in efforts to give a better future for children. It said it was encouraged by the heads of state and government at last year's World Summit for Children who called for universal action for the protection and development of children.

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DH/976
17 September 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- General Assembly opens forty-sixth session; elects new President; admits seven States to United Nations membership.

- Samir S. Shihabi of Saudi Arabia is President of forty-sixth session of General Assembly.

- Secretary-General sends letter to Foreign Ministers of all United Nations Member States to address "worst financial crisis" since Organization was founded.

- Pledging conference seeks funds for Horn of Africa; Secretary-General says recent political breakthroughs in region give rise to hope for millions of refugees, returnees and persons affected by drought.

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The General Assembly this morning opened its forty-sixth regular session. After the traditional moment of silent prayer or meditation, Member States elected the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, Samir S. Shihabi, as the new President of the General Assembly. He was elected by a majority of 83 votes. The candidates of Papua New Guinea and Yemen received 47 votes and 20 votes, respectively. All three candidates were put forward by the Asian Group.

In his opening address, President Shihabi spoke extensively about the growing social and economic disparities in the world. He cited the debt burden of developing countries, saying that it was a "stark picture of the imbalance in human society which, if we do not deal with it urgently, will disrupt the balance in every field".

He called on Member States to evaluate the capabilities of the United Nations in its larger dimension and the abilities of the Secretariat as the executive organ, and to study the manner in which it could be enabled to meet its responsibilities.

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The Assembly decided, by consensus, to admit seven new States to United Nations membership: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

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The General Assembly today elected Samir S. Shihabi of Saudi Arabia as the President for its forty-sixth session.

Mr. Shihabi has served his country as an Ambassador for more than 27 years -- since 1983 as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He joined the Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry in 1949 and later served as First Secretary in Switzerland and as Chargé d'affaires in Rome.

In 1961, Mr. Shihabi was appointed Director of the Foreign Ministry's United Nations and International Organizations Department -- his initial professional involvement in the work of the United Nations. He has also been his country's Ambassador in Turkey, Somalia and Pakistan. Since 1974, he has also been a member of Saudi Arabia's delegation to the United Nations for 15 General Assembly sessions, including his service as Permanent Representative.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has sent a letter to the Foreign Ministers of all Member States of the United Nations to address what he calls the Organization's "worst financial crisis" since it was founded.

A United Nations spokesman told correspondents today that the Secretary-General had been forced to borrow from peace-keeping funds since the third week of August in order to meet basic operating costs of the Organization.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar had written to thank the 51 States which had paid their 1991 assessed contributions in full. To the other Member States currently in arrears he had written, "We thus face a stark alternative: either we manage effectively to address the financial problem, or the United Nations will be rendered incapable for lack of resources to perform its far-reaching functions with the required effectiveness, especially for the maintenance of peace and security."

The Secretary-General appealed personally to the Ministers to make every effort to ensure that the countries concerned pay their full assessments by the end of September.

According to a report released yesterday on status of contributions as of 1 September, unpaid assessments to the regular budget total $809.5 million, of which $471.4 million relate to the current year and $338.1 million to prior years. Unpaid assessments towards the peace-keeping budget as of 1 September amount to $486.9 million.

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Speakers at the Donors' Pledging Conference on Emergency Assistance to the Countries of the Horn of Africa have called for coordinated United Nations action to meet the needs of millions of refugees, returnees and persons affected by drought in that region.

The Pledging Conference, which was held yesterday at Headquarters, was convened in response to a consolidated inter-agency appeal for some $400 million to cover emergency assistance for Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya.

In an opening statement, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said civil war, economic deterioration and an unusually severe drought had combined to threaten the lives and well-being of over 22 million people in the region. Traditional coping mechanisms had been exhausted and people had been forced to eat grass and leaves. Fortunately, the Secretary-General went on, there had recently been several political breakthroughs in the region that had given rise to hope for the millions at risk.

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